



UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
United States Patent and Trademark Office
Address: COMMISSIONER FOR PATENTS
P.O. Box 1450
Alexandria, Virginia 22313-1450
www.uspto.gov

APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
-----------------	-------------	----------------------	---------------------	------------------

09/954,775

09/18/2001

Michael Orlando Cimini

13DV13971

7795

29399 7590 07/07/2008

JOHN S. BEULICK (12729)
C/O ARMSTRONG TEASDALE LLP
ONE METROPOLITAN SQUARE
SUITE 2600
ST. LOUIS, MO 63102-2740

EXAMINER

SAINDON, WILLIAM V

ART UNIT

PAPER NUMBER

3623

NOTIFICATION DATE

DELIVERY MODE

07/07/2008

ELECTRONIC

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

The time period for reply, if any, is set in the attached communication.

Notice of the Office communication was sent electronically on above-indicated "Notification Date" to the following e-mail address(es):

USpatents@armstrongteasdale.com

DETAILED ACTION

1. The following FINAL Office Action is in response to Applicant's submission received March 27, 2008. Claims 1, 3, 4, 6, 9, and 15 have been amended. No claims have been amended or canceled. Therefore, claims 1 and 3-20 are pending.

Response to Amendment

2. The 35 USC § **112 ¶ 2 rejection** to claims 1 and 3-20 is **not withdrawn** in light of Applicant's amendments. As provided in the § 112 rejection below, the claims remain indefinite.

3. The 35 USC § **103 rejection** to claims 1 and 3-20 is **not withdrawn** in light of Applicant's amendments rolling up dependent claim limitations into the independent claims. Please refer to the § 103 rejection below.

Response to Arguments

4. The 35 USC § **103 rejection** to claims 1 and 3-20 as unpatentable over Powers et al. (US 6,606,804) in view of Suzuki et al. (US 6,625,511) is **not withdrawn** in light of Applicant's arguments.

Applicant argues that neither Powers nor Suzuki disclose a "weighted value assigned by a user." The Examiner respectfully disagrees. At col. 9, lines 19-35, Powers recites that the question is assigned a weight by the user based upon the category of the question. In the example given the question relates to the category

"promptness," and based upon the importance of promptness to the company, a weight is given. Therefore, it is clear that Powers discloses this feature in at least this manner.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 112

5. The following is a quotation of the second paragraph of 35 U.S.C. 112:

The specification shall conclude with one or more claims particularly pointing out and distinctly claiming the subject matter which the applicant regards as his invention.

6. Claims 1 and 3-20 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which applicant regards as the invention.

As to claim 1, in the "compare" element, it is unclear what is being compared. Only "process production capability information" and "per category weighted value[s]" have been received. No useful comparison can take place between the information and the weights. The limitation recites "answers to respective questions." However, no previous recitation of soliciting answers from question was made. It is unclear where the questions and answers are coming from. If the previously received information is the questions and answers, then this relationship should be positively recited. As such, a step or series of steps appear to be missing.

Further, in the "display at least one suggestion" element, it is unclear what is being displayed. Initially, "at least one suggestion for improving performance of the desired manufacturing function" is displayed. However, the claim goes on to recite that the "at least one suggestion for each category of the production process is displayed." Is there at least one suggestion displayed, or at least one suggestion for each category?

Or, is there at least one suggestion displayed for each category that the user selects for display? All three interpretations are equally likely from the claim, rendering the claim indefinite.

Further claims are rejecting for containing the same or similar language.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103

7. The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

8. Claims 1 and 3-20 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Powers et al. (U.S. 6,604,084) in view of Suzuki et al. (U.S. 6,625,511).

As per claim 1, Powers et al. discloses a system for evaluating process performance, said system comprising:

a device (See figure 1 and column 2, line 58-column 3, line 13, wherein a client device is disclosed); and

a server connected to said device and configured to receive, from a user via said device, information pertaining to process performance evaluation categories selected by the user (See column 9, lines 47-64, column 11, lines 32-60, wherein the evaluation categories are set up by a user), said server further configured to:

receive process production capability information data using a computer (See figure 1, column 2, lines 58-67, and column 3, lines 14-24);

receive a per category weighted value assigned by a user (See column 9, lines 19-35, noting that the question is assigned a weight by the user based upon the category of the question. In the example given the question relates to the category "promptness," and based upon the importance of promptness to the company, a weight is given; column 11, line 62-column 12, line 25);

compile the received information (See column 2, lines 1-12, column 3, lines 39-55, column 4, lines 20-40, column 9, lines 14-32, which compile received information);

display to the user information related to the production process (See column 2, lines 1-12, column 3, lines 39-55, column 4, lines 20-40, and column 5, lines 25-28, wherein information is displayed to a user);

compare the received information in the form of answers to respective questions to reference information in the form of answers to questions developed to encompass an expected range of answers from the users responding to the questions, wherein each question is related to at least one category of the production process (See column 4, lines 25-40, column 5, lines 10-28, column 9, lines 7-18 and 28-47, column 11, line 49-column 12, line 10 and lines 44-51, which discloses processing the received information against reference information. The received information is in the form of answers to questions stored in the system. These answers are compared against all possible answers to the questions. See column 1, lines 34-46 and 58-65, column 3, lines 43-column 4, line 25, column 8, line 61-column 9, line 20 and lines 48-64, and column 13, lines 32-45, which discloses the relationship of questions to performance areas and categories); and

display the results of the compared information based on the weighted value assigned by the user to the user via said device wherein the results include a numerical score representing a relative capability of the process being evaluated to perform a desired function (See column 2, lines 1-12 and 50-60, column 3, lines 39-55, column 4, lines 20-40, and column 5, lines 25-28, wherein results information is displayed to a user. These results concern the evaluation of productivity and quality of a process); and

display information useful in determining the overall performance and identifying ways to improve performance (See column 4, lines 25-35),

wherein the results and information are sortable based on filters associated with categories of the process (See column 4, lines 25-35, column 5, lines 10-30, column 6, line 66-column 7, line 11, and column 13, lines 25-50 and 63-67);

wherein the at least one suggestion is based on the received information in the form of answers to respective questions (See column 4, lines 25-40, column 5, lines 10-28, column 9, lines 7-18 and 28-47, column 11, line 49-column 12, line 10 and lines 44-51, which discloses processing the received information against reference information. The received information is in the form of answers to questions stored in the system);

and wherein the at least one category results and information is displayed for each category of the production process based on user selection of that category for which to display the at least one category results and information (See column 3, lines 43-column 4, line 25, column 8, line 61-67, column 11, lines 49-60, and column 13, lines 32-45, disclosing the relationship of questions to performance areas and categories, wherein the completed evaluations are output and displayed to the user, and each

category is specified in a separate table). Further, in the broadest reasonable interpretation, only one category is required and thus one category is displayed one at a time.

However, Powers et al. does not expressly disclose that the desired function is a manufacturing function or displaying at least one suggestion for improving performance, wherein the suggestions are sortable.

Suzuki et al. discloses manufacturing functions and displaying at least one suggestion for improving performance, wherein the suggestions are sortable (See figure 11, column 7, lines 60-67, column 12, lines 30-40 and 60-67, column 19, lines 15-35, column 20, lines 55-63, which discloses evaluating a manufacturing process and/or function and displaying point by point suggestions for improvement. See specifically column 20, lines 54-67, which discloses sorting the results and displaying improvements in descending order).

Powers et al. discloses a performance evaluation system that uses questions and production associated with performance areas to generate quality and performance reports concerning an individual, group, process, or other suitable type of item or operation. Powers et al. specifically discloses that the results and information displayed are sortable based on filters associated with categories of the process. Manufacturing functions are a type of process or operation. Suzuki et al. discloses evaluating manufacturing processes and/or functions and displaying suggestions for improvement via a computer display, wherein improvements are displayed sorted in descending order. It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the

Art Unit: 3623

invention to use the performance evaluation system of Powers et al. in the manufacturing field in order to more efficiently generate evaluation data and reports in the manufacturing industry through application of an automated system. Powers et al. discusses the ability of the system to allow an enterprise to set up the performance evaluation system to fit the organizational structure of that specific enterprise, thus making the tool customizable to any enterprise and enterprise situation. See column 2, lines 58-64, column 5, lines 10-20 and line 65-column 6, line 5. Further, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention to display suggestions to the user based on the performance evaluation performed by Powers et al. in order to more efficiently improve the quality of the manufactured items by reducing the likelihood of errors associated with manufacturing. See Suzuki et al., column 3, lines 20-25, 37-45, and 60-67.

As per claim 3, Powers et al. discloses wherein said server is further configured to receive information regarding at least one of a planning, shop practices, and operator skill (See column 9, lines 5-30, which discloses receiving information regarding operator skill).

As per claim 4, Powers et al. discloses wherein said server is further configured to receive information regarding at least one of a complexity, conditions, control, error proofing, measurement, and process (See column 2, lines 50-60, column 3, lines 45-60, which discloses productivity analysis of the process).

As per claim 5, Powers et al. discloses wherein said server further configured to receive information including a numerical score that expresses a relative capability of a

Art Unit: 3623

process performance (See column 1, line 57-column 2, line 12 and lines 51-57, column 3, lines 45-60, column 4, lines 26-36, column 9, lines 48-55, and column 13, lines 20-35, wherein information is received that expresses a relative capability of a process performance). However, Powers does not expressly disclose that this process performance is performing a desired manufacturing function.

Powers et al. discloses a performance evaluation system that utilizes productivity and quality data. Powers et al. specifically discloses that the performance evaluation system is used to evaluate an individual, a group, a process, or other suitable types of operation. See column 2, lines 50-60, and column 5, lines 45-52. Therefore, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention to receive information regarding the process of a manufacturing function in order to more efficiently perform a performance evaluation this process by efficiently communicating with users of a network environment that have input regarding the process. See column 1, lines 35-47, and column 2, lines 1-12, which discuss the benefits of such an automated system.

As per claim 6, Powers et al. discloses wherein said server is further configured to:

sum received information weights assigned by the user for each category (See column 9, lines 10-30, column 10, lines 1-12, and column 11, line 62-column 12, line 25, wherein received information is summed);

evaluate weighted summed data based on category selected (See column 9, lines 10-30, column 10, lines 1-12, and column 11, line 62-column 12, line 25, wherein the data is evaluated); and

As per claim 7, Powers et al. teaches wherein said device is configured to be a server for a network of customer devices (See figure 1 and column 2, line 58-column 3, line 22, column 5, lines 25-45, wherein the device serves to other devices).

As per claim 8, Powers et al. discloses wherein said server and said device are connected via a network (See figure 1, column 3, lines 1-20, column 5, lines 39-45, wherein the server and device are connected via a network).

As per claim 9, Powers et al. teaches a method for evaluating performance capabilities of a production process by operating a system including a server and at least one device connected to the server, said method comprising:

defining, using a computer, area categories based on an evaluation of the production performance capabilities of at least one of the process and the part being evaluated (See figure 5A-B, column 1, line 58-column 2, line 5 and lines 50-60, column 3, lines 45-60, column 8, line 60-column 9, line 30 and lines 45-60, wherein evaluation areas are established to evaluate performance capabilities of the process); and

receiving, using the computer, information relevant to the capabilities of the production process within the evaluation categories (See column 2, lines 1-12 and 50-60, column 5, lines 25-30, column 9, wherein information is received).

Powers et al. and Suzuki et al. further teaches the remaining elements, which are equivalent to limitations in claim 1. Therefore, these elements are rejected using the same art and rationale set forth above in the rejection of claim 1.

As per claim 10, Powers et al. discloses assigning a weight factor to information received within each evaluation category (See column 9, lines 10-30, column 10, lines 1-12, and column 11, line 62-column 12, line 25, which disclose weight factors).

Claim 11 recites substantially similar elements to claim 5 and is therefore rejected using the same art and rational as set forth above.

As per claim 12, Powers et al. discloses wherein displaying the results further comprises numerically ranking the production process evaluation areas based on the results (See column 2, lines 1-12, column 3, lines 39-55, column 4, lines 20-40, and column 5, lines 25-28, wherein results are displayed in a numerically ordered ranking).

As per claim 13, Powers et al. teaches wherein displaying the results further comprises displaying the results in a format that facilitates comparisons between a plurality of production process evaluation areas (See column 3, line 43-column 4, line 15 and lines 25-35, column 5, lines 25-30, wherein the results are shown by date, time, user, hierarchical level, etc.).

As per claim 14, Powers et al. teaches wherein defining evaluation area categories further comprises selecting at least one evaluation area category that represents at least one of production complexity, conditions, control, error proofing, measurement, operator skill, planning, process, and shop practices (See figures 5A-B,

Art Unit: 3623

column 2, lines 50-60, column 3, lines 45-60, column 9, lines 5-30, which disclose at least operator skill and productivity analysis).

As per claim 15, Powers et al. teaches a method for evaluating performance of a production process using a network connecting a plurality of users, the network including a server and a plurality of user display devices, said method comprising:

receiving from the users using a computer, information concerning evaluation categories relevant to the production process (See column 2, lines 1-12 and 50-60, column 5, lines 10-27, column 9, lines 20-45, which disclose soliciting information from users);

assigning each evaluation category at least one weighted factor that normalizes the received information with respect to the received information's relative contribution to a process capability improvement (See column 9, lines 10-30, column 10, lines 1-12, and column 11, line 62-column 12, line 25, which disclose weight factors that regulate each questions worth in the overall score);

Powers et al. and Suzuki et al. further teach the remaining elements, which are equivalent to limitations in claim 1. Therefore, these elements are rejected using the same art and rationale set forth above in the rejection of claim 1.

Claims 16, 17, 19, and 20 recite substantially similar elements as claims 13, 14, 5, and 12, respectively, and are therefore rejected using the same art and rationale as set forth above.

As per claim 18, Powers et al. discloses wherein soliciting from the users information concerning evaluation categories further comprises soliciting information

Art Unit: 3623

from the users via at least one of a survey, radio push-buttons, and pull-down menu (See column 9, lines 20-45, which disclose at least radio buttons and drop-down lists).

Conclusion

9. Applicant's amendment necessitated the new grounds of rejection presented in this Office action. Accordingly, **THIS ACTION IS MADE FINAL**. See MPEP § 706.07(a). Applicant is reminded of the extension of time policy as set forth in 37 CFR 1.136(a).

A shortened statutory period for reply to this final action is set to expire THREE MONTHS from the mailing date of this action. In the event a first reply is filed within TWO MONTHS of the mailing date of this final action and the advisory action is not mailed until after the end of the THREE-MONTH shortened statutory period, then the shortened statutory period will expire on the date the advisory action is mailed, and any extension fee pursuant to 37 CFR 1.136(a) will be calculated from the mailing date of the advisory action. In no event, however, will the statutory period for reply expire later than SIX MONTHS from the date of this final action.

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to William V. Saindon whose telephone number is (571)270-3026. The examiner can normally be reached on M-F 7:30-5; alt. Fridays off.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Beth Van Doren can be reached on (571) 272-6737. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 571-273-8300.

Art Unit: 3623

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free). If you would like assistance from a USPTO Customer Service Representative or access to the automated information system, call 800-786-9199 (IN USA OR CANADA) or 571-272-1000.

/wvs/

/Beth Van Doren/
Supervisory Patent Examiner, Art Unit 3623